

# The impact of divorce on children welfare in Bitereko sub county, Mitooma district

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the causes of divorce, examine the effects of single parenting on children's welfare, and explore the relationship between single parenting and childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District. The descriptive sample survey design using both qualitative and quantitative techniques was employed in collecting, analyzing, and presenting the data. The findings revealed multiple causes of divorce, including unwanted pregnancies (25%), long-distance work commitments (25%), alcoholism (25%), polygamous families (15%), forced marriages (18.3%), and frequent parental travel (33.3%). Single parents, particularly widows, face emotional and financial challenges that can negatively impact their parenting roles. The study identified both positive and negative effects of single parenting on childhood development. On the positive side, 33.3% of respondents noted that children from single-parent families receive support from extended networks, 28.3% highlighted the reduction in parental conflict, and 50% believed children are spared from negative parental behaviors. However, negative effects include financial constraints (33.3%), lack of discipline (30%), long parental working hours reducing engagement with children (25%), and increased vulnerability to depression (13.7%). Additionally, children from single-parent households often experience self-esteem issues (18.3%). To mitigate divorce and its effects, respondents suggested fostering friendship among spouses (75%), ensuring financial contribution from both partners (50%), engaging in meaningful conversations daily (45%), and promoting women's empowerment (35%). Religious and community-based interventions were also recommended to reinforce family stability. In conclusion, while single parenting presents certain benefits, it poses significant challenges that can affect children's well-being. Addressing the root causes of divorce and strengthening family structures through social and economic support systems are crucial for improving children's welfare in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District.

**Keywords:** Divorce, Single Parenting, Child Welfare, Bitereko Sub County, Childhood Development.

## INTRODUCTION

For over 20 years, approximately 250 million years of productive life have been lost due to death or disability related to poor sexual and reproductive health [1]. This issue remains a significant global concern, particularly for women and children who are most vulnerable to the adverse effects of inadequate healthcare [2,3]. Furthermore, as climate change continues to influence various aspects of life, it is the poorest women and children who bear the highest burden. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, food insecurity, and resource depletion exacerbate the challenges faced by these vulnerable groups [4]. However, women have the potential to lead necessary changes to enhance resilience in the face of climate change. To empower women in taking on these leadership roles, it is essential to meet their needs for adequate healthcare and education [5]. The

challenges faced by women are further compounded by the lack of support structures when they attempt to establish worker-controlled institutions [6]. The system presents significant barriers, limiting their access to crucial resources such as funding and information. Consequently, these constraints create a hostile environment that often leads to failure [7]. Additionally, workplace discrimination, including sexual harassment and unfair labor practices, continues to drain female workers both physically and emotionally [8,9]. Over the past two decades, single-parent households have become more common than the traditional nuclear family model, which consists of a mother, father, and children [10]. Today, there are various forms of single-parent families, including those headed by mothers, fathers, and even grandparents raising their grandchildren [11]. Life in

a single-parent household presents numerous challenges, as both the adult and children often experience stress due to limited resources and overwhelming responsibilities. Single parents may struggle to balance childcare, employment, and household responsibilities, often leading to financial difficulties [12]. Furthermore, children in single-parent families may experience emotional distress due to the absence of one parent.

Children aged seven to twelve tend to express their emotions more openly and seek external support; however, they may also exhibit social and academic difficulties [13]. Adolescents, on the other hand, often struggle the most with parental separation. They may distance themselves from family members, internalize their emotions, and face challenges in forming long-term relationships [13]. Child abuse remains a pressing issue worldwide, affecting children, families, and entire communities. The long-term consequences of abuse include mental health issues, behavioral

problems, and an increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors [14,15]. Family physicians play a crucial role in identifying and reporting child abuse cases, preventing further harm, and providing ongoing support to affected families [16]. Furthermore, child development is significantly influenced by environmental factors. Studies indicate that physical abuse can lead to structural brain changes, affecting cognitive function, learning abilities, and social behavior. Issues such as juvenile delinquency and the behavioral effects of children with incarcerated parents further contribute to academic struggles and social difficulties [17, 18]. Children from single-parent households face increased risks of mental health issues, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. The relationship between divorce and children's welfare in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District remains a crucial area of study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The survey research design was used. The descriptive sample survey design enabled the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative techniques in collecting, analyzing, and presenting the data.

### **Study Population**

For the purpose of research activities, the researcher used Krejcie and Morgan [19] tables to determine the sample size. According to Krejcie and Morgan a population of 180 had a sample size of 123. However, the researcher reduced 123 to 120 for easier computations. The target population comprised 180 people, including political leaders, students from institutions of higher learning, civil servants, leaders of women's groups/associations, and teachers in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District. The sample size consisted of 120 respondents selected from four categories: 15 civil servants, 40 leaders of women's groups/associations, 15 political leaders, 30 students from institutions of higher learning, and 20 teachers. This sample size was sufficient to enable the researcher to gather all the necessary information. The selected groups were considered to have relevant information on the impact of divorce on children's welfare in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District.

### **Sampling Strategies**

Respondents, including students from higher institutions, teachers, and civil servants, were selected using purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, the researcher chose the sample based on who was deemed appropriate for the study. This method is primarily used when there is a limited number of people with expertise in the researched area. Key informants were selected using purposive sampling due to their positions. Political leaders and leaders of women's groups/associations were selected using simple random sampling. Simple random

sampling is easy to accomplish and explain to others. Since it is a fair way to select a sample, it allows the generalization of results from the sample to the population. Here, the law of chance was applied, and the researcher used a table of sample random numbers for selection. This method was used for students, political leaders, and teachers.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The primary methods used to collect data for the study were questionnaires, direct interviews, and Focus Group Discussions.

#### **Questionnaire**

The researcher used questionnaires to collect information from many respondents within a limited time. All respondents were asked the same questions except in technical circumstances, particularly for teachers and civil servants. Respondents selected the best alternatives from given options. This method was applied to students, teachers, and civil servants, as they were all literate.

#### **Direct Interview**

In qualitative research, interviews are described as conversations aimed at obtaining valid and valuable information. This method was applied to leaders of women's groups/associations and political leaders. Interviews allowed for clarification and enabled the interviewer to reveal their viewpoint.

#### **Focus Group Discussion**

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted during the study. FGDs are structured group interviews designed to foster discussions among participants on specific issues. Participants were given opportunities to agree or disagree, allowing them to reach conclusions. Discussions were conducted in the sampled area, not to study the group itself but to gather information within a short time. Leaders of women's groups/associations and students

from higher institutions participated in FGDs, where they engaged in discussions while the researcher recorded their responses. The researcher interacted with participants from similar backgrounds to foster discussions on the influence of women's emancipation on urban family stability. A predetermined discussion guide was followed to direct conversations and collect in-depth information on participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences. This approach provided flexibility for participants to express themselves openly, generating multiple answers to specific questions.

#### Validity of the Study

Instruments must measure accurately what they are intended to measure. Before administration, they were pre-tested on colleagues taking the same course as the researcher. The instruments were then scrutinized by the supervisor to ensure the terms used in the questionnaires and interviews were precisely defined and properly understood. Finally, the instruments were pilot-tested on a sample population of 10 respondents.

#### Reliability of Instruments

An instrument is reliable if it consistently measures what it is intended to measure. The researcher conducted a pilot study with 10 respondents from Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District.

#### Data Analysis

Responses from questionnaires, interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and observations were categorized into themes, resulting in pie charts, percentages, and tables. The researcher used thematic content analysis, translating the objectives into themes and sub-themes, then analyzing the results accordingly for proper interpretation.

#### Study Limitations and Delimitations

Some respondents provided incorrect information, possibly due to personal experiences with the issue under study. In cases where respondents were uncooperative, the researcher approached them with polite language to encourage participation. Time constraints also posed a challenge to data collection. To address this, the researcher utilized weekends for fieldwork.

#### Ethical Considerations

The purpose of the study was explained to respondents to gain their confidence. When human beings are used as study participants, care must be taken to ensure their rights are protected. The researcher respected human dignity and did not disclose respondents' identities. Only informal consent was sought.

## RESULTS

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents included the gender, age and level of education. These were presented in details in table 1.

**Table 1: Socio- demographic distribution on gender, age and level of education**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	26	43.3
Females	34	56.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-30 years	13	21.7
31-40 years	17	28.3
41-50	15	25
51 and above	15	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education level</b>		
Bachelors	15	25
Diploma	9	15
Certificate	20	33.3
No Education	16	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The responses from the table above on socio demographic characteristics indicated that 43.3% of

the respondents were males whereas 56.7% were females. The findings in table 4.1, the majority of the

respondents (56.7%) were female while males were the minority (30%). Though there was a substantial variation in the percentage of male versus female, opinions given were reflective of what was pertaining in single parenting and childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District since both were represented in matching percentages. The responses also indicated that 21.7% of the respondents were between 20-30 years where as 28.3% were between 31-40 years. The responses also

indicated that 25% were within the range of 41-50 whereas 25% were of 51 years and above. The responses also showed that 25% had attained education up to a Bachelor level, 15% had attained up to a diploma level, 33.3% had attained certificate whereas 26.7% had no education. The table indicates that the majority of respondents 73.3% had attained a level in education and hence knew how to read and write. 26.7% of the respondents had no education.

#### **The causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District**

**Table 2: The rating of the problem of single parenting in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by civil servants**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	6	40
Medium	6	40
Low	3	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the table above, the rating of the problem of single parenting in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by civil servants were as

follows; 40% rated it to be high, 40% rated it to be medium and 20% rated it to be below.

**Table 3: Students responses on whether they thought unwanted pregnancies is one of the major causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	15	50
Agree	10	33.3
Disagree	5	16.7
Strongly disagree		
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, students' responses on whether they thought unwanted pregnancies is one of the major causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County,

Mitooma District showed that 50% strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed and 16.7% disagreed.

**Table 4: The causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by all respondents**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Un wanted pregnancy	15	25
Divorce	12	20
Death of one of the parents	10	16.7
Working by one of the parents in long distance	15	25
Alcoholism	15	25
Polygamous families	9	15
Forced marriage	11	18.3
Child adoption	3	5
Parents lifestyle	14	23.3
Constant traveling by one the parents	20	33.3

According to the table above, the causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by all respondents; unwanted pregnancy given by 25%, divorce given by 20%, death of one of the parents given by 16.7%, working by one of the parents in

long distance given by 25%, alcoholism given by 25%, polygamous families given by 15%, forced marriage given by 18.3%, child adoption given by 5%, parents lifestyle given by 23.3% and constant traveling by one the parents given by 33.3%.

## The effects of divorce on children welfare in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District

**Table 5: Teachers responses on whether they thought it is hard to maintain discipline in the home as a single parent will be the only disciplinarian**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	15	75
Agree	5	25
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the table above, 75% of the teachers thought it is hard to maintain discipline in the home

as a single parent will be the only disciplinarian while 25% agreed.

**Table 6: Positive effects of single parenting on childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by all respondents.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Children who have single parents will also have many supporters	20	33.3
Children will understand the value of their contribution and can take pleasure in their work	15	25
Children brought up in single parent families will realize their importance in their parents' lives	9	15
There will be no parental conflict, and it eases tension and stress for both the parent and the child.	17	28.3
Not being affected by the bad character from one the parents	30	50

The above shows the positive effects of single parenting on childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by all respondents we include; children who have single parents will also have many supporters given by 33.3%, there will be no parental conflict, and it eases tension and stress for both the parent and the child given by 28.3%, children

brought up in single parent families will realize their importance in their parents' lives given by 15%, not being affected by the bad character from one the parents given by 50% and children will understand the value of their contribution and can take pleasure in their work given by 25%.

**Table 7: Negative effects of single parenting on childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by all respondents**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of enough resources to raise a child	29	33.3
It might be hard to maintain discipline in the home as a single parent	18	30
Most single parents work long hours to meet the financial needs of the family.	15	25
Parent's long hours of working may make him/her miss child's important school functions.	8	13.3
The children are likely to suffer from self-esteem problems	11	18.3
Children in a single-parent household don't receive adequate supervision	16	26.7
Children of single parent homes are especially vulnerable to depression	19	13.7
Lack of both parents' love	10	16.7

According to the table above, negative effects of single parenting on childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by all respondents include; Lack of enough resources to raise a child given by 33.3%, it might be hard to maintain discipline in the home as a single parent given by 30%, most single parents work long hours to meet the financial needs of the family given by 25%,

parent's long hours of working may make him/her miss child's important school functions given by 13.3%, lack of both parents love given by 16.7%, children in a single-parent household don't receive adequate supervision given by 13.7%, children of single parent homes are especially vulnerable to depression given by 13.7% and the children are likely to suffer from self-esteem problems 18.3%.

**The possible measures to combat divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District**

**Table 8: Political leaders' responses on whether they thought Women should be empowered to be able to make their own decisions free from fear of coercion or pressure from partners, family, and society.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	15	100
Agree		
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

Basing on the table above, political leaders responses on whether they thought women should be empowered to be able to make their own decisions

free from fear of coercion or pressure from partners, family, and society showed that all (100%) strongly agreed.

**Table 9: The possible measures to combat divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by teachers**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
There should be friendship among spouses	15	75
The two partners need to work to support their families.	10	50
Women must be empowered to be able to make their own decisions free from fear of coercion or pressure from partners, family, and society.	7	35
There is a need to make time to connect lovingly with your spouse every day.	11	55
Having a good fearing family	15	75
Avoid alcoholism	8	40
Take time every day to have meaningful conversations with each other	9	45
To talk about your goals for the marriage and your lives	10	50
Love your spouse in the way he/she wants to be loved.	9	45

As shown above, the possible measures to combat divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District as given by teachers as given by teachers include; there should be friendship among spouses given by 75%, the two partners need to work to support their families given by 50%, love your spouse in the way he/she wants to be loved given by 35%, there is a need to make time to connect lovingly with your spouse

every day given by 55%, having a good fearing family given by 75%, avoid alcoholism given by 40%, take time every day to have meaningful conversations with each other given by 45%, to talk about your goals for the marriage and your lives given by 50%, women must be empowered to be able to make their own decisions free from fear of coercion or pressure from partners, family, and society given by 35%.

### DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify the causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District, examine the factors affecting children's welfare in the area, and establish the relationship between single parenting and childhood development. The following discussions present the findings.

#### **Causes of Divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District**

The findings revealed several causes of single parenting in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District, as reported by respondents. These causes include unwanted pregnancy (25%), divorce (20%), the death of one parent (16.7%), long-distance work by one parent (25%), alcoholism (25%), polygamous families (15%), forced marriage (18.3%), child adoption (5%), parental lifestyle (23.3%), and constant traveling by one parent (33.3%). Single parenting due to

widowhood often imposes unforeseen parenting obligations, causing emotional distress and a difficult adjustment period. Widowed single parents commonly experience emotions such as anger, denial, depression, bargaining, and eventual acceptance, all of which impact their parenting abilities. The support of family and friends is essential for single parents to navigate these challenges [20].

#### **Effects of Divorce on Children's Welfare in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District**

The study identified both positive and negative effects of single parenting on childhood development in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District.

##### **Positive Effects**

Children raised by single parents often receive support from multiple sources (33.3%). The absence of parental conflict reduces tension and stress for both

the parent and the child (28.3%). Children in single-parent households recognize their importance in their parents' lives (15%). They avoid negative influences from one parent's bad character (50%). Children develop an appreciation for their contributions and take pride in their work (25%).

#### **Negative Effects**

Lack of sufficient resources to raise a child (33.3%). Difficulty in maintaining discipline in a single-parent household (30%). Long working hours of single parents to meet financial needs (25%). Parents' long working hours may cause them to miss important school functions (13.3%). Lack of love from both parents (16.7%). Inadequate supervision of children in single-parent households (13.7%). Increased vulnerability of children in single-parent homes to depression (13.7%). Higher likelihood of self-esteem problems among children (18.3%). Children raised in single-parent families recognize their significance in their parents' lives, which prepares them for future challenges [21].

The findings of this study highlight the primary causes of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District, including unwanted pregnancy, divorce, death of a parent, long-distance work, alcoholism, polygamy, forced marriage, child adoption, parental lifestyle, and frequent travel. The study also identified both positive and negative effects of single parenting on childhood development. Positive effects include increased external support for children, reduced parental conflict, increased self-worth among children, avoidance of negative parental traits, and an appreciation for personal contributions. Negative effects include limited financial resources, difficulties in discipline, long working hours, missed school

#### **Possible Measures to Combat Divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District**

Teachers provided several recommendations to address the issue of divorce in Bitereko Sub County, Mitooma District:

- Spouses should cultivate strong friendships (75%).
  - Both partners should contribute financially to support their families (50%).
  - Partners should express love in ways that are meaningful to each other (35%).
  - Couples should set aside time daily to connect affectionately (55%).
  - Families should be God-fearing (75%).
  - Alcoholism should be avoided (40%).
  - Couples should engage in meaningful daily conversations (45%).
  - Partners should discuss their marital and life goals together (50%).
  - Women should be empowered to make independent decisions without coercion or societal pressure (35%).
- African society does not inherently perceive women as inferior. However, women are expected to excel in the workplace while maintaining their traditional roles as mothers and household managers [22]. The lack of balance between professional and domestic responsibilities overburdens women, contributing to marital challenges and, in some cases, divorce.

#### **CONCLUSION**

events, lack of love from both parents, inadequate supervision, vulnerability to depression, and self-esteem issues. Lastly, the study proposed several measures to combat divorce, such as fostering friendships between spouses, ensuring financial support from both partners, expressing love in meaningful ways, setting aside daily quality time, maintaining religious values, avoiding alcoholism, engaging in meaningful conversations, discussing marital goals, and empowering women to make independent decisions. By implementing these measures, the prevalence of divorce in Bitereko Sub County can be mitigated, thereby improving childhood development and overall family welfare.

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